CLAIM AMENDMENTS

1. (Original) A composite material comprising colloidal silica-bonded alkaline earth silicate fibers in which any bonding agents or fillers comprise low amounts of alumina so that the composite material comprises less than 1% by weight aluminium expressed as $Al_2O_3$.

2. (Previously Presented) A composite material as claimed in claim 1 in which the composite material comprises less than 0.5% by weight of aluminium expressed as $Al_2O_3$.

3. (Previously Presented) A composite material as claimed in claim 2 in which the composite material comprises less than 0.1% by weight of aluminium expressed as $Al_2O_3$.

4. (Original) A composite material as claimed in claim 1 in which the composite material is essentially free of aluminium.

5. (Original) A composite material as claimed in claim 1 and comprising less than 1% by weight sodium expressed as $Na_2O$.

6. (Original) A composite material as claimed in claim 5 and comprising less than 0.5% by weight sodium expressed as $Na_2O$.

7. (Original) A composite material as claimed in claim 6 and comprising less than 0.1% by weight sodium expressed as $Na_2O$.

8. (Original) A composite material as claimed in claim 1 in which the composite material is essentially free of sodium.

9. (Original) A composite material as claimed in claim 1 and comprising less than 0.5% by weight boron expressed as $B_2O_3$.

10. (Original) A composite material as claimed in claim 9 and comprising less than 0.1% by weight boron expressed as $B_2O_3$.

11. (Previously Presented) A composite material as claimed in claim 1 in which the alkaline earth silicate fibre is itself adapted for use without excessive shrinkage at temperatures in excess of 1200 °C.

12. (Previously Presented) A composite material as claimed in claim 1 in which the material is obtainable by vacuum forming from a slurry containing the following ingredients in weight %:-

| | |
|---|---|
| Alkaline earth metal silicate fibres | 70-85% |
| Colloidal silica (30% $SiO_2$ by weight) | 3-25% |
| Organic binder | 1-6% |
| Filler | 11-20% |

13. (Previously Presented) A composite material as claimed in claim 12 comprising:-

| | |
|---|---|
| Alkaline earth metal silicate fibres | 70-90% |
| Silica binder from colloidal silica (30% $SiO_2$ by weight) | 1-10% |
| Organic binder | 1-6% |
| Filler | 11-20% |

14. (Previously Presented) A composite material as claimed in claim 13 comprising:-

| | |
|---|---|
| Alkaline earth metal silicate fibres | 77.3-87.2% |
| Silica binder from colloidal silica (30% $SiO_2$ by weight) | 1.2-8.2% |
| Organic binder | 3.3-4.7% |
| Filler | 12.8-18% |

15. (Original) A composite material as claimed in claim 1 in which the material is a paper comprising:-

| | |
|---|---|
| Alkaline earth metal silicate fibre | 90-95% |
| Organic binder | 5-10% |
| Organic flocculants | <1% |

16. (Original) A composite material as claimed in claim 15 in which the organic binder is an acrylic latex.

17. (Previously Presented) A composite material as claimed in claim 1 in which the material is a material obtained by vacuum forming from a slurry comprising the ingredients:

| | |
|---|---|
| Alkaline earth metal silicate fibre | 60 parts by weight |
| Colloidal silica (30% by weight $SiO_2$) | 12-14 parts by weight |
| Starch | 2.5 parts by weight |

based upon the total weight of solids added to the slurry;

and in which the colloidal silica has a pH of less than 8.

18. (Previously Presented) A composite material comprising 4-12% by weight colloidal silica, 3-6.5% starch, balance alkaline earth silicate fibre, to total 100% based on the weight of composite material.

19. (Previously Presented) A composite material as claimed in claim 18 and comprising 4-9% by weight colloidal silica, 3.5-5% starch, balance alkaline earth silicate fibre, to total 100% based on the weight of composite material.

20. (Original) A composite material as claimed in claim 18 comprising about 6% colloidal silica.

21. (Previously Presented) A composite material as claimed in claim 1 in which the material is a material obtainable by vacuum forming from the ingredients:-

| | |
|---|---|
| "White water"component | 50-80% by volume of 30% solids colloidal silica with 20-50% by volume water |
| Alkaline earth metal silicate fibre | 0.5-4% by weight of fibre, calculated as the weight of the fibre solids per weight of white water component |

and in which the colloidal silica has a pH of less than 8.

22. (Currently Amended) A composite material as claimed in claim 1 in which the material is a material obtainable by vacuum forming from the ingredients:-

| | |
|---|---|
| "White water"component | 90-100% by volume of 30% solids colloidal silica with 10-0% by volume water |
| Alkaline earth metal silicate fibre | 2-3% by weight of fibre, calculated as the weight of the fibre solids per weight of white water component |

and in which the colloidal silica has a ~~Ph~~ pH of less than 8.

23. (Previously Presented) A composite material as claimed in claim 21 and which comprises 15-30% by weight silica binder formed from colloidal silica, balance fibre.

24. (Original) A composite material as claimed in claim 17 in which the fibre is present in amounts comprising 0.5-5% by weight of the water in the slurry.

25. (Currently Amended)A composite material as claimed in claim 1 in which the material is a material obtainable by vacuum forming from the ingredients

| | |
|---|---|
| "White water"component | 65-100% by volume of 40% solids colloidal silica having a ~~Ph~~ pH of less than 10 with 35-0% by volume water |
| Alkaline earth metal silicate fibre | 2-3% by weight of fibre, calculated as weight of fibre solids per weight of white water component |

wherein the sodium content of the colloidal silica is below 0.1 wt%.

26. (Original) A composite material as claimed in claim 22 and which comprises 15-30% by weight colloidal silica, balance fibre.

27. (Canceled)

28. (Canceled)